

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1010

INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

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USEC BRUSSELS 1004

US MISSION GENEVA 634

AMEMBASSY BONN

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 851

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: LABOR SITUATION: WORK STOPPAGES AMONG GOVT
EMPLOYEES, ACTORS, AND OTHERS

REF: (A) MADRID 664 (B) MADRID 826

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. IN WHAT MAY BE SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT, WORK STOPPAGES TOOK PLACE DURING RECENT DAYS AMONG SOME GOVT EMPLOYEES IN VARIOUS MINISTRIES OVER DIVERSE ISSUES RELATED TO PAY, PROFESSIONAL STATUS, AND WORKING CONDITIONS, REPORTEDLY FOR FIRST TIME IN HISTORY OF FRANCO REGIME. GOVT MAY REACT WITH PAY INCREASES COMBINED WITH DISCIPLINARY MEASURES. OTHER CURRENT STRIKE ACTIVITY INVOLVES ACTORS, MARKET SHOP KEEPERS, AND INDUSTRIES IN SCATTERED LOCALITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. COMMENCING ON JAN 31, WHEN A NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES
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AT SPANISH FINANCE MINISTRY STAGED A TWO-HOUR WORK

STOPPAGE (WHICH HAD EFFECT OF DELAYING END-OF-MONTH PAY CHECKS FOR NUMEROUS GOVT EMPLOYEES), SEVERAL NATIONAL GOVT MINISTRIES HAVE BEEN PARTIALLY AFFECTED BY STRIKE ACTIVITY, CULMINATING ON FEB 4 WHEN SEVERAL HUNDRED EMPLOYEES IN AT LEAST FIVE GOVT MINISTRIES, INCLUDING STAFF PERSONNEL AT FOREIGN MINISTRY, CONDUCTED WORKSTOPPAGES OF TWO-THREE HOURS DURATION. MOTIVATIONS FOR THESE WORK STOPPAGES VARIED, BUT LARGELY INVOLVED DEMANDS FOR SALARY AND COST OF LIVING INCREASES, IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS, AND QUESTIONS RELATING TO PROFESSIONAL STATUS. THIS IS REPORTEDLY FIRST TIME UNDER FRANCO REGIME THAT NUMBERS CENTRAL GOVT EMPLOYEES AND CIVIL SERVANTS HAVE ENGAGED IN SUCH STRIKE ACTIVITY. ALTHOUGH WORK STOPPAGES HAVE NOT CONTINUED BEYOND FEB 4, ON FEB 5 A PETITION WAS SENT TO PRESIDENT ARIAS SIGNED BY MANY HUNDREDS OF GOVT EMPLOYEES AND OFFICIALS, IN WHICH THERE REPORTEDLY AT LEAST SOME SIGNATURES OF PERSONS OCCUPYING HIGH LEVEL POSTS IN THE ADMINISTRATION. THIS PETITION REPORTEDLY CALLS FOR GOVT TO URGENTLY CARRY OUT LONG-PROMISED REFORMS OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION; FOR THE POLITICAL NEUTRALITY, INDEPENDENCE, AND DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION; AND FOR VARIOUS PAY, STATUS, AND WORKING CONDITION DEMANDS AT ROOT OF RECENT WORK STOPPAGES TO BE MET.

3. ALSO DURING PAST FOUR DAYS; TWO OTHER NOVEL FORMS OF STRIKE ACTIVITY HAVE AFFECTED MADRID, I.E., (A) A STRIKE BY SMALL SHOPKEEPERS AT CERTAIN MADRID MARKETS IN PROTEST AGAINST THE RECENT ARREST OF ONE OF THEIR NUMBER; AND (B) A STRIKE BY MADRID'S ACTORS AND ACTRESSES OVER PROFESSIONAL ISSUES, AMONG WHICH THE KEY ISSUE HAS BEEN QUESTION OF WORKER REPRESENTATIVITY (SAME ISSUE HAS ALSO BEEN A KEY QUESTION IN SOME OF INDUSTRIAL CONFLICTS OF RECENT MONTHS. THUS ACTORS AND ACTRESSES HAVE ELECTED A COMMISSION OF 11 PERSONS, INCLUDING SEVERAL PROMINENT STAGE PERSONALITIES, TO SEEK TO NEGOTIATE A WIDE RANGE OF IMPROVEMENTS IN BENEFITS FOR THE ACTING PROFESSION. HOWEVER, DESPITE FACT SYNDICAL MINISTER FERNANDEZ SORDO

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HAS MET WITH ACTORS' DELAGATIONS SEVERAL TIMES DURING LAST FEW DAYS, SPANISH SYNDICAL ORGANIZATION (SSO) STILL MAINTAINS POSTURE IT CANNOT FORMALLY NEGOTIATE WITH THIS UNOFFICIAL ACTORS COMMISSION, BECAUSE LATTER WAS NOT ELECTED WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF RECOGNIZED OFFICIAL SYNDICATE STRUCTURE. ACTORS AND ACTRESSES STRIKE HAS ALREADY CLOSED DOWN MADRID'S 27 LEGITIMATE THEATERS FOR PAST TWO NIGHTS, AND HAS ALSO AFFECTED TV ACTORFAM

4. TEMPO OF INDUSTRIAL STRIKE ACTIVITY ALSO APPEARS TO HAVE PICKED UP ONCE AGAIN WITH: (A) SOME 7,500 WORKERS STILL ON STRIKE AT VARIETY OF FIRMS IN BILBAO AREA; (B) STRIKE BREAKING OUT FOR FIRST TIME THIS SEASON AMONG EVERY VOLATILE MINERS AT GOVT-OWNED HUNOSA COAL MINES IN ASTURAS (WHICH STRIKE APPEARS TO BE LARGELY POLITICAL IN MOTIVATION AND HAS INVOLVED 5,000 TO 9,000 OF COMPANY'S 25,000 MINERS); AND (C) AT NORTHERN PORT CITY OF EL FERROL, WHERE A CONTRACT DISPUTE AT ASTANO SHIPYARDS HAS RESULTED IN CONTINUING STRIKES FOLLOWED BY RETALIATORY SANCTIONS.

5. OTHER RECENT EVENTS RE LABOR SPHERE INCLUDE: (A) ARREST OF 36 MEMBERS OF EXTREMIST CATHOLIC ORT LABOR ORGANIZATION (PRINCIPAL CATHOLIC COMPONENT OF WORKERS COMMISSIONS) WHILE THEY WERE CELEBRATING A MEETING IN A MADRID CHURCH ON FEB 2; (B) STIFF FINES LEVIED ON DOZEN PAMPLONA AREA PRIESTS FOR THEIR ALLEGED PARTICIPATION IN RECENT LABOR AGITATION IN PAMPLONA; (C) FEB 5 SIT-IN BY 300 EMPLOYEES AT MADRID'S LARGEST HOSPITAL, WHO WERE FORCEABLY EVICTED BY POLICE; AND (D) ANNOUNCEMENT THAT HEARING OF APPEALS IN FAMOUS "CARABANCHEL TEN" CASE WOULD TAKE PLACE ON FEB 21 (SEE REF B) WITH EXPECTED PRESENCE OF FOREIGN TRADE UNION AND POLITICAL OBSERVERS.

6. ADDITIONALLY, ATMOSPHERE HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT FURTHER CHARGED BY STUDENT MANIFESTATIONS AND DISTURBANCES AT UNIVERSITIES IN MADRID, VALLADOLID, SEVILLE AND OVIEDO.

7. COMMENT: PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT HAVE BEEN STRIKE ATTEMPTS BY GOVT EMPLOYEES AND FUNCTIONARIES, REFLECTING

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FACT THAT LABOR UNREST AND DISCONTENT IN THIS VITAL SECTOR HAS REACHED POINT WHERE MIDDLE CLASS GOVT EMPLOYEES ARE WILLING TO SPEAK UP AND DEMAND WHAT THEY CONCEIVE AS THEIR RIGHTS THROUGH SUCH PROTEST ACTIONS, WHILE DISREGARDING RISK OF JEOPARDIZING THEIR CAREERS.

8. GOVT IS UNDOUBTEDLY PERTURBED BY NEW SPECTACLE OF SCATTERED WORK STOPPAGES BY CIVIL SERVANTS. FRANCO GOVT'S HISTORIC SENSITIVITY TOWARDS THIS CRUCIAL SECTOR IS REFLECTED IN FACT THAT GOVT HAS NEVER ALLOWED GOVT EMPLOYEES TO JOIN OR HAVE THEIR OWN SYNDICAL REPRESENTATION WITHIN GOVT-CONTROLLED SSO, TO WHICH HOWEVER ALL OTHER WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS IN SPAIN ARE OBLIGED TO BELONG. SIGNIFICANTLY, ONE OF DEMANDS FORMULATED BY GOVT EMPLOYEES DURING WORK STOPPAGES AND IN THEIR PETITION

TO PRESIDENT ARIAS, IS THAT THEY IN FACT BE ALLOWED
RIGHT TO ORGANIZE AND BELONG TO A SYNDICATE. WITHIN
SPANISH OFFICIAL SYNDICAL STRUCTURE, IN ORDER TO HAVE,
LIKE OTHER SPANISH WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES, A CHANNEL IN
WHICH THEY CAN PURSUE THEIR OWN LEGITIMATE INTERESTS
AND EXPRESS THEIR GRIEVANCES TO THE APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES.

9. IT RUMORED GOVT MAY SOON ANNOUNCE SUBSTANTIAL NEW PAY
INCREASES FOR GOVT EMPLOYEES AND VIVIL SERVANTS, AS A
MEANS OF HOPEFULLY HEADING OFF ANY FUTURE SUCH DANGEROUS
MANIFESTATIONS OF DISCONTENT IN GOVT EMPLOYEE SECTOR.
GOVT, HOWEVER, WILL PROBABLY CONTINUE TO USE "CARROT
AND STICK" APPROACH, AND IS CONSIDERED LIKELY TO PUNISH
WITH SANCTIONS OR OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES A FEW OF
PERSONS INVOLVED AS RINGLEADERS IN CURRENT LABOR
AGITATION IN GOVT MINISTRIES, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON
THAN TO MANIFEST GOVT'S AUTHORITY AND UPHOLD PRINCIPLE OF
DISCIPLINE. (RE A DIFFERENT RECENT INCIDENT, GOVT HAS
ANNOUNCED SANCTIONS INVOLVING TWO WEEK SUSPENSION OF
CIRIACO DE VICENTE, LABOR MINISTRY FUNCTIONARY WHO ALSO
DOUBLES AS A JOURNALIST, FOR SOME RECENTLY WRITTEN HIGHLY
CRITICAL ARTICLES ON LABOR MINISTRY WHICH APPEARED IN
PRESTIGIOUS MAGAZINE "CAMBIO 16".)

10. FACT THAT NOT ONLY GOVT EMPLOYEES, BUT, FOR UNRELATED
REASONS, STAGE ACTORS AND SMALL SHOPKEEPERS, HAVE STRUCK
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FOR FIRST TIME, MIGHT SIGNIFY THAT MIDDLE CLASSES, LONG
PRINCIPAL BASTION OF REGIME, NOW FEEL THAT THEIR ECONOMIC
(AND PERHAPS POLITICAL) FRUSTRATIONS ARE SUCH, THAT IT
IS NECESSARY FOR THEM TO HAVE RECOURSE TO THE ULTIMATE
STRIKE WEAPON IN ORDER TO DEFEND THEIR RIGHTS AND
PAROCHIAL INTERESTS. THIS TREND, SHOULD IT CONTINUE,
IS APT TO GIVE PAUSE TO REGIME. ONE EFFECT THIS DIS-CONTENT
IN MIDDLE CLASS SECTORS IS LIKELY TO STIMULATE, IS
ACCELERATION OF GOVT'S EFFORTS SEEK TO COME TO TERMS WITH
QUESTION OF WHETHER TO GRANT RIGHT TO STRIKE (REPORTEDLY
THERE IS A DECREE IN PREPARATION UNDER WHICH GOVT
MIGHT GRANT MODIFIED RIGHT TO STRIKE. SEE REF A.)
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